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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Friday, July 24, 1942.

SUBJECT: "CANNING PEACHES AT HOME" Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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These are days when many of us are canning fruit to stock our cupboards for wintertime meals - fruit like the peaches now coming on the market in quantity. (As you know, peaches are the "Victory Food Special" for the period from July 16 to August 5.)

So, if you want to take advantage of the peach harvest at its heaviest, plan to serve this fruit for meals during that period. Better yet, plan to can some peaches. And here are tips from home economists in the U. S. Department of Agriculture on just how to can peaches by the "pack hot" method - a good safe way to put them up.

Canning by this method saves jar space, too - especially important now with the shortages in metal and rubber. You want to make every jar hold as much food as possible.

But now - on to the steps you take to can peaches by the "pack hot" method. The first thing to do, of course, is wash the peaches. They may look clean enough sometimes, but wash them anyway because there's usually some dust on the skins. Use cold water and don't soak them - just let the water pour over the fruit or duck them in a cold bath.

Then comes the job of removing the skins. If peaches are ripe, their skins generally come off quite easily. But pare them thin to save as much fruit as possible. And here's something to watch -- don't hold the peach so tightly while paring that you bruise it. Ripe peaches bruise quickly if you don't handle them gently. You know how tender peaches are.

If the skin is hard to get off, put the peaches in hot water for about a half minute or until the skins will slip off easily. Then duck them in cold water for a few seconds before removing the skins. Hot water may turn peaches brown in color, so it's a good idea to put the peaches, after their skins are removed, in a solution of salt, vinegar, and water for about two minutes. This helps prevent such darkening. Use 2 tablespoons each of salt and vinegar to a gallon of cold water.

The next step is getting juice from the peaches--juice to pour over the fruit in the jars. To can fruit in its own juice is a good way to hold in the fruit flavor. So cut the peaches in slices, or the little ones in halves, if you prefer. You can get more juice by slicing. You can get more fruit in the jars, too, in slices -- another way of saving jar space.

When you've cut up the fruit, put it in a kettle and add sugar. This is a most economical way to use your canning ration of sugar. Putting the sugar directly on the fruit slices helps draw out the juice and wastes no sweetening.

Let the sugar stand on the peaches a few moments before heating them - just long enough to start the juice coming. Then put the pan on the stove. Heat the peaches slowly until the sugar has dissolved, and the fruit is hot through and through. But take care not to cook the fruit until it's soft.

Now for packing and processing the peaches. Put the boiling hot fruit with its juice in clean, hot jars. Fill each jar to within an inch of the top and pack the fruit firmly but not too tight. Add enough juice to fill in any nooks and crannies in the jars.

Next comes <u>processing</u> the fruit. For this you need a water-bath canner -- that is, any kettle with a tight cover big enough around to hold several jars of fruit, and high enough for water to cover the jars 1 to 2 inches above their tops.

You also need some kind of rack in the bottom, to keep the jars off the bottom of the vessel.

Have water boiling in the canner before putting in your jars of fruit. Then place them on the rack, leaving enough room between each one so water can circulate freely both under and around it. When the jars are in the canner, see that the water comes over the tops at least 1 or 2 inches, and keep it this way all the time you're processing.

As soon as the water begins to boil hard, start counting time. Peaches that are precooked and packed hot in glass jars need 15 minutes of processing for either quart or pint jars. This is the right time for processing if you live at sea level or no higher than a thousand feet above. But up in the mountains, over a thousand feet, you have to process peaches longer.

As soon as you've finished processing the fruit, remove the jars from the canner and set them right-side-up somewhere to cool. When they are cool and before storing them away, test each one by turning it upside down for a few minutes to make sure it has no leaks and is airtight.

That's the story of canning peaches in slices. Of course, you can also can them in halves. To do this, make a light sirup, using the proportion of 5 cups of sugar to a gallon of water. Heat the sirup. When it comes to a boil, drop in the peach halves. When the fruit has become thoroughly hot in the sirup, fill your jars and process in the boiling water bath.

Well, that's all for now about canning peaches. I hope you have good luck with yours. If you do it the right way, you're bound to.

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